

# Bligh Infant School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118500
<b>Local Authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	291150
<b>Inspection dates</b>	15–16 March 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Selwyn Ward

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tim Pledger
<b>Headteacher</b>	Celia Toone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 November 2001
<b>School address</b>	Bligh Way Strood Rochester ME2 2XJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01634 710154
<b>Fax number</b>	01634 710154

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average infant school, although, in common with other schools in the area, the number of pupils has fallen in recent years. An average number of pupils has learning difficulties and disabilities. The number of pupils learning English as an additional language is small. The school is in the throes of major building works to create a Children's Centre catering for babies and pre-school children. A Nursery class was opened in September 2006, offering morning or afternoon provision.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Bligh Infant School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. It is a happy school where children feel safe and enjoy their lessons. Their personal development and well-being are good because they like and are helped by their teachers and the other adults in the school. They benefit from the good care, guidance and support that the school provides.

Children are generally of below-average ability when they start in the Reception and Nursery Years. Their language and social skills are especially low. As they have in other parts of the school, the building works have hindered provision in this Foundation Stage. However, the children are helped to make sound progress, although standards remain below average by the end of the Reception Year. Standards at the end of Year 2 are average overall. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics. Achievement is satisfactory rather than good, however, because standards in writing are not as good as they could be. It is the more able pupils who do not do well enough in writing. This has been the situation for some years and it has been long recognised by school leaders. Initiatives have been tried in order to boost standards in writing but these have not had as much impact as hoped for. In part, this is because of the variation in the quality of teaching in the school. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are some classes where pupils make very good progress but others where progress is much slower. In some classes, teachers do not have high enough expectations of the quality, presentation or amount of pupils' writing. With the good support of teaching assistants, teaching does a good job of meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as those learning English as an additional language. More-able pupils are not as well catered for because not enough is expected of them.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The governing body has for some time been carrying a large number of vacancies. This has prevented it from doing its job effectively. Despite the difficulties caused by the building works, the headteacher and leadership team have been successful in creating an environment where pupils are happy and want to learn and where they make sound progress. They have not been as successful in eliminating the inconsistent practice between teachers and therefore in tackling weaknesses identified in the last inspection. The building works have delayed progress in improving the curriculum. Teachers are increasingly finding creative links between different subjects. The curriculum remains satisfactory, however, because the construction works have limited pupils' opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT).

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing by raising teachers' expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' written work.
- Set challenging work for more-able pupils that extends their learning.
- Fill the vacancies on the governing body and ensure that governors are equipped to both support and challenge the school.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Children's levels are generally below average when they start in the Foundation Stage. Their language and social skill levels are especially low. Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage, although standards

remain below average by the end of the Reception Year. The current emphasis on learning phonics is having a positive impact. As a result, children are making good progress in their language development, albeit from a low base.

Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 and 2. They do notably better in mathematics than English. For some years, Year 2 assessments in mathematics have been a little above average while those in English have mostly been below. It is particularly writing that has pulled down pupils' achievement. Despite several initiatives, standards in writing remain stubbornly below average and below those in reading and mathematics. It is the most able pupils who do not do as well as they should in writing. Because they are well supported, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make steady progress, as do those learning English as an additional language.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils enjoy coming to school because 'school is fun'. They highlight literacy, mathematics and science as among their favourite parts of the day. Year 2 pupils describe how they especially enjoy 'helping the little ones'. From the youngest children in the Foundation Stage, pupils are eager to support each other, showing consideration and respect for other children and for adults. Behaviour around the school and in class is good, with pupils showing independence and growing self-control and confidence. They are keen to take on responsibilities and the position of 'special helper' in each class is much sought after. The school councillors are also proud of their roles, and of having been democratically elected. They are aware of the impact of the current building project in restricting the space available to them and are eager to offer advice about how the school should be improved when it is completed.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle. They carefully explain the importance of a healthy diet, although they are not always so keen to practise what they preach. They do, however, enjoy eating fruit in school and regularly drink water in class. Pupils feel safe and are confident that adults are there to help them. They take pride in their contributions to the wider school community and have a good understanding of the purpose behind their Red Nose Day fundraising. Their satisfactory development of basic skills and the good provision being made to support their move on to junior school are giving them a sound basis for future economic success. Attendance is satisfactory.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Although there is much good practice, this is not consistent across the school or within year groups and so pupils' progress shows corresponding variation, especially in writing. Teachers know their pupils well and have good relationships with them. They make generally good use of questioning to draw out pupils' answers and to check their understanding. Activities in the Foundation Stage are closely matched to children's different needs. Throughout the school, however, work is not always well matched to ability. Too often, pupils with a very wide range of abilities are expected to do essentially the same work. This is not so much a problem for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities because they are supported well by teaching assistants. It is the more able who do not make as much progress as they could. When tasks do

not build sufficiently on what pupils can do and are not well matched to their abilities, some pupils' attention wanes and they become fidgety.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The school has been developing the curriculum to make it more interesting and exciting for pupils by linking work in different subjects, so that, for example, work in art draws on what pupils have done in science and history. The building work has slowed the school's improvement plans. It has also limited the quality of provision in the Nursery and Reception classes by restricting space. Throughout the school, it has set back the progress that had been made with improving opportunities for using ICT because it has temporarily reduced pupils' access to computers. However, pupils and families are beginning to benefit from extended school facilities in the before- and after-school clubs and children are enthusiastic about the good range of extra activities offered.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school has strong links with external agencies to support pupils where needed, including close liaison with the Children's Centre, which is still currently under local authority control. Child protection procedures are securely in place and pupils receive good guidance on how to stay healthy and safe. Children and adults have good relationships based on mutual respect. As a result, pupils are confidently able to call on support when it is needed. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities and to share their opinions – which are being acted on in the planning of the new building. Pupils are aware of the targets for improvement that have been set for them in mathematics and English. Year 2 pupils, in particular, talk positively about what they mean for them. Some classes are beginning to develop children's abilities to assess their own progress, but this is not consistently in place.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and leadership team have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing and of those areas that could be improved. A succession of initiatives to raise standards in writing has yet to show success, although children in the Reception Year are beginning to make more rapid progress as a result of the new phonics programme. Some improvements have been hampered because school leaders have had to direct efforts at minimising the disruption caused by the building works, which have taken much longer than was originally anticipated.

School leaders are aware of the variation in the quality of teaching within year groups. They have attempted to raise the quality of teaching by, for example, pairing some very effective teachers with others who are less confident. This has resulted in teachers planning their work together. There remains, however, very considerable variation in the way in which each teacher interprets and put into practice these shared plans, so that pupils make significantly better progress in some classes than others. Where school leaders demonstrate most notable success is in creating a stimulating environment where pupils feel secure and want to learn. This has resulted in pupils' good personal development, which is keenly appreciated by parents. One commented on how they had chosen this school even though it was not their nearest.

The school has struggled to recruit a full governing body. It has more vacancies than governors in place. This places a huge burden on the very small number involved. While governors are enthusiastic, they do not play a significant role in directing the work of the school or in constructively challenging school leaders.

Several of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection, including writing, opportunities to use ICT, and the role of governors, are also areas in need of improvement this time around. Nonetheless, the accurate picture that the school has of itself and its success in raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem show that it has satisfactory capacity to improve.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

### **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

I am writing to let you know how much we enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you all for making us so welcome and helping us. We especially enjoyed seeing you all in your nursery rhyme and fairy tale costumes for Red Nose Day. Some of you recognised me in my disguise as Big Ears from the Noddy stories.

We know that your school is going through a lot of changes at the moment because of all the building works. This has caused a few problems for Mrs Toone and the teachers. For example, it has made it more difficult for you to use computers.

We think that your school is giving you a sound education. Teachers are helping you to make reasonable progress and you enjoy all the things you learn and do in lessons. Staff look after you really well and that is one of the reasons why you feel happy and safe in school. We were pleased to see how well behaved you all are.

There are some things that we think could be better in your school. We can see that you do not all do as well in writing as you do in other subjects, like mathematics. We think your teachers should give you more writing to do and you should take more care to make sure your writing is as neat as it can be. Often you are all doing the same work in lessons. That means the work is too easy for some of you. We were disappointed to see that there are a lot of places left on your governing body. We would like to see these filled so that you have a full set of governors who can take a more active part in the school.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly when we came to see you.